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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT
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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Wednesday September 20, 1944.

SUBJECT: Fruit HasaPlace in the Garden. Information from Fruit Specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Quite a number of suburban gardeners have been gathering information on growing fruit for home use, especially the kinds like strawberries, that may give you some returns as early as a year after planting. Experienced gardeners say home fruit growing has advantages if you have sufficient gardening space.

One especially appealing advantage is that you can cater to individual preferences your family may have for flavors and texture. The varieties of fruits and vegetables grown commercially have been carefully bred for characteristics that make them good travelers. They have to be shipped from the fields to market by truck or train usually. It is important to everybody concerned, including yourself as a buyer, that these fruits arrive at their destination in good condition. But often the varieties that lack the ability to stand shipping well have especially delicious flavor and delicate texture. Now, if you plan to gather fruit for your family from your own garden, no shipping is involved and you need not restrict your planting to the commercial varieties. In fact, if your space is limited, you can well use it to supplement the commercial fruits you can buy at the market.

There are varieties of fruit, too, that commercial growers don't plant because they are seldom called for. Occasionally these less widely known varieties are very well liked by the people who are familiar with them. If your family has a favorite variety, you may want to consider planting it when you make your selections. You might also obtain good pointers on the characteristics of different varieties by talking with more experienced members of your garden club.

We can give a vote of thanks to our plant breeders and nurserymen for the many different varieties in fruit. Some varieties of strawberries, for example, are very sweet, others have a tart flavor. Some are favorites for eating fresh, some are "musts" for shortcake, some for preserves or quick freezing, and so on down the line of uses. Some ripen very early, some in the middle of the season, and some late. And the everbearing varieties should be considered for their special contribution to the menu. If you jot down the qualities you would like to have in your strawberries or other fruit and talk the matter over with the nurseryman, he would be able to suggest varieties that would have at least some of the things you have in mind.

Of course you need to be sure you have a suitable place to plant your fruit. Strawberries are often planted at one side or end of the vegetable garden. Placed here they are not disturbed when you start putting the soil in shape for the vegetables. The soil should be reasonably fertile and well drained. A location where the soil tends to remain wet after rain would not be suitable.

Your nurseryman can tell you the best time to plant. Usually, I understand, a better stand of strawberries will be obtained by setting them as early in the spring as possible to prepare the soil. Some of the other fruits you wish to consider have their individual requirements as to planting, soil, location and such.

Cultivation is a matter that we rightly think about when we consider a new adventure in gardening. Experienced gardeners say this will not be too serious to those of us accustomed to taking care of vegetables. Under most conditions, they say, the same methods of maintaining the fertility of the soil that are followed in a vegetable garden are successful with home fruit plantings. Altogether home fruit growing looks like a good enterprise for the gardener who has the space. Perhaps those who do not have enough room for growing the entire supply for the family can still give some space over to plants that will supplement the supply bought at the market. I am sure you and your family will get much enjoyment from growing your pet varieties.

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